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AUTHOR Swanson, Charles H.
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ABSTRACT

In an effort to determine how many West Virginia students were receiving specific instruction in the skills of speaking and listening, a survey of college introductory speech communication classes was devised. The survey, designed to determine whether separate courses or integrated skill instruction within English/language arts classes were being provided, was administered to undergraduates in seven West Virginia higher education institutions who, for the most part, had completed their high school work since speaking and listening skills were included in the West Virginia High School Graduation Requirements. The data suggested that some English language arts teachers were sensitive to the graduate requirements and the subsequent English language arts curriculum actions by the West Virginia Department of Education. These results prompted the following recommendations: (1) all graduates of West Virginia high schools should receive specific instruction in speaking and listening skills; (2) all students need a development program in oral communication education; (3) all students need a qualified oral communication teacher; (4) all English teachers should receive proper inservice training until qualified oral communication teachers are available; (5) speaking and listening skills should be recognized as essential, deserving a year of special attention; and (6) speaking and listening skills should be included in a balanced curriculum. (HOD)

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ORAL COMMUNICATION EDUCATION IN WEST VIRGINIA, 1984: CONTEXT, STATUS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

by

Charles H. Swanson, Ed.D.
Professor and Coordinator
Department of Speech Communication and Theatre
Fairmont State College
Fairmont, West Virginia

A Report to the
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INTRODUCTION

In 1980, West Virginia high school students were given the opportunity for a complete language skills curriculum through the English-language arts content requirement in the High School Graduation Requirements adopted by the West Virginia Board of Education. The development of a content requirement including the skills of speaking and listening anticipated a national movement which has exploded in recent years. The current national drive for excellence in education includes a specification of speaking and listening skills as a part of basic academic skills. This paper will examine the oral communication education in West Virginia within the national context of the excellence in education movement, present data about the current status of oral communication education and present recommendations for the future of oral communication education.

NEED

The skills of speaking and listening were included in the West Virginia High School Graduation Requirements adopted by the West Virginia Board of Education in January, 1980 (see Appendix 1). After extensive public hearings and deliberations during 1979, the West Virginia Board of Education went beyond merely specifying broad subject areas and assigning numbers of units. Each subject area description included a rationale and a description of the kind of content which the State Board expected to be taught. While the English-language arts subject area required four units (years) of instruction, the content of this subject area was defined also. Ten basic skill areas were identified within the English-language arts content as requiring specific instruction, including speaking and listening (see Appendix 1).

Speaking and listening have been identified in virtually every recent curriculum related document in the West Virginia Department of Education. Those documents range from: Educational Goals for West Virginia Policy (2100) to Standards for Educational Quality (Policy 2320).

Oral Communication skills are needed in daily living, in school and on the job. When most people examine their daily lives, they discover that they are using the skills of speaking and listening in a vast majority of their daily communicative efforts: reading and writing skills are generally used in less than 25 percent of the average adult's daily communicative efforts. Paul T. Rankin discovered that the average adult spends around 75 percent of their day using the skills of speaking and listening (see Appendix 2). Rankin also discovered that speaking and listening skills are rarely taught, creating an inverted curriculum. Rankin's 1928 discovery has remained unchanged today. Ironically, most students are expected to learn through listening in 50 to 96 percent of their classtime ... without any listening skill instruction (see Appendix 3). Most jobs in the complex world of business and technology demand high levels of speaking and listening skills. Most students are expected to listen from 50 to 96 percent of their classtime (see Appendix 3). Most jobs demand a considerable use of speaking and listening skills. Frighteningly, one corporate study revealed that American business and industry are losing at least one billion dollars a year because of poor listening. With the growth of technology in an age of information, few people will be able to function effectively without higher levels of speaking and listening skills. As the tourism industry in West Virginia develops and business competition intensifies, higher levels of speaking and listening skills will be imperative.

At the national level, the place of oral communication education has been established strongly within the past decade. In 1976, a consortium of 18 professional associations representing virtually every aspect of education joined as the Organizations For the Essentials of Education. That organization produced a pamphlet, THE ESSENTIALS OF EDUCATION: A CALL FOR DIALOG AND ACTION, in which all education professionals affirmed the neet for "balanced education". The pamphlet warned against a simplistic application of the idea of basic skills as the 3 R's: the range of skills and knowledge essential to the citizen in this modern, complex society were defined. Included in those essential skills were speaking and listening.

Legally, the place of oral communication in the basic skills was explicitly defined in P. L. 95-561, the Education Amendments of 1978. In that public law, passed by Congress and signed by the President, one of the explicitly defined basic skills was "effective oral communication". Since the passage of P. L. 95-561, the skills used in "effective oral communication" have been generally recognized as speaking and listening.

In 1982, Mortimer J. Adler published THE PAIDEIA PROPOSAL: AN EDUCATIONAL MANIFESTO on behalf of the members of the Paideia Group. The Paideia Group involved twenty-two of America's top intellectuals who met to consider the state of American education and to develop a proposal to reform and improve the education system. In a three-

curriculum design, Adler and the Paideia Group describe the second curriculum tier as development of skills which are skills of learning.

> The skills to be acquired are the skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, observing, measuring, estimating and calculating. They are linguistic, mathematical and scientific skills. They are the skills that everyone needs to learn anything, in school or elsewhere. Without them, it is impossible to go on learning by one's self, whether for pleasure or to qualify for a new job, or to be promoted in the present one... Only to the degree that students develop these skills, and form the habit of using them, can instruction in language and literature, mathematics and natural sciences, history and geography be successful. (p.26) (emphasis added)

As a consequence of these professional and legal definitions, speaking and listening are included in virtually every major statement about basic or general education. The year, 1983, produced four major national policy statements about education. All four documents affirmed the place of speaking and listening in the curriculum.

The National Commission for Excellence in Education published its report, A NATION AT RISK: THE IMPERATIVE FOR EDUCATION REFORM, in April of 1983. Included in this Presidential Commission's report was a recommendation for four years of English instruction which among the objectives "should equip the graduates to listen effectively and discuss ideas intelligently".

In June 1983, the Task Force on Education for Economic Growth published its report ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE: A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO IMPROVE OUR NATION'S SCHOOLS, for the Education Commission of the States. In this report, a list of "Basic Skills for Productive Employment" which was drawn up by business representatives included speaking and listening competencies (see Appendix 4).

The College Board published a significant booklet, ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE: WHAT STUDENTS NEED TO KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO, in July, 1984. Speaking and listening were identified as Basic Academic Competencies. The College Board explained,

> The Basic Academic Competencies are reading, writing, speaking, and listening, mathematics, reasoning and studying. These competencies are interrelated to and interdependent with the Basic Academic subjects. Without such competencies, knowledge of history, science, language and all other subjects is unattainable. (emphasis added) (p. 7) (see Appendix 5).

Finally, in 1983, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching published HIGH SCHOOL: A REPORT ON SECONDARY EDUCATION IN AMERICA, written by Ernest L. Boyer. This Carnegie Foundation report recommended

> that high schools give priority to oral communication, requiring all students to complete a course in speaking and listening (p. 92). (see Appendix 6)

The demand did not cease with the end of 1983. In Spring, 1984, the College Board published a monograph "ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD OF WORK," in which speaking and listening were again identified. This report stated

> "Speaking and listening -- This competency was singled out as the major form of communication in business and industry, yet one in which many students receive little or no instruction" (p. 3) (see Appendix 7)

Thus the demand for speaking and listening in the curriculum of American schools comes from most of the major voices in American education. The West Virginia Board of Education had anticipated the demand for oral communication education in the West Virginia High School Graduation Requirements of 1980.

CURRENT STATUS

Since speaking and listening were defined in the West Virginia High School Graduation Requirements, the question remains as to whether all high school students are receiving "specific instruction" in the skills of speaking and listening in compliance with those requirements. The assumption of the West Virginia Board of Education and all the curriculum definitions cited above was that speaking and listening skill instruction would be provided within the content of English-language arts classes.

Since most English teachers have little or no oral communication training, a concern persists as to whether speaking and listening skills do, in fact, receive specific instructional attention.

In an effort to determine how many West Virginia students are receiving specific instruction in the skills of speaking and listening, a survey of college introductory speech communication classes was devised. (see Appendix 8). This survey was designed to determine whether separate courses

or integrated skill instruction within English-language arts classes is being provided. This survey was administered in seven (7) West Virginia higher education institutions, at all levels including: Parkersburg Community College, Concord College, Fairmont State College, Glenville State College, West Liberty College, Marshall University and West Virginia University.

The students sample involves undergraduates who, for the most part, have completed their high school work witnin the past one to three years (since the adoption of the new requirement).

A total of _____ college students were surveyed:

The summary results of this survey are listed below in a comparative chart. In 1979, a similar survey was reported. This chart suggests the changes caused by the 1980 graduation requirements:

CHART I
STUDENTS ENTERING WEST VIRGINIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES WITH ORAL COMMUNICATION TRAINING.

	FSC 1979	FSC 1984	SUMMARY OF ALL OTHER WV INSTITUTIONS 1984 *
Total Number of Students Surveyed	247	224	1968
Percent of Students taking an oral communication class in high school (semester or year in duration)	22%	19%	26.9%
Percent of Students receiving oral communication instruction in English-language arts classes	27%	55%	50.4%
Percent of Students receiving listening instruction in high school	05%	21.4%	36.4%

* NOTE: The summary of all West Virginia institutions does not include the data from Fairmont State College.

By separating the FSC data from all other reporting institutions, the similarity or difference in response patterns can be noted.

A detailed summary of the data is presented in Appendix 9.

The development of at least some oral communication instruction for some West Virginia high school students is revealed by this study. This data suggests that some English-language arts teachers are sensitive to the graduation requirements and the subsequent English-language arts curriculum actions by the West Virginia Department of Education. The increase in oral communication instruction is significant without much evidence of a formal program to develop oral communication.

TECHNICAL CONCLUSIONS:

Working through the survey data, several points became obvious.

1. Using the computer to process the survey data allows for more sophisticated analysis.

2. Any future surveys should clearly distinguish between speech classes and oral communication instruction in English-language arts classes.

3. The graduation date of each respondent would help identify the information on those who have graduated since the implementation of the 1980 graduation requirements.

4. A special coding and response entry for each high school in West Virginia as well as identify the out-of-state respondents will make this survey of greater significance next year. Those schools offering oral communication could be specifically identified.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. While the gains in oral communication education are significant, more explicit effort is required to assure that all graduates of West Virginia high schools have received specific instruction in the skills of speaking and listening. Considering the essential nature of speaking and listening, excuses of teacher deficiencies or administrative expedience are unacceptable. West Virginia high school graduates must be able to compete in our modern, complex world with adequate training in all the basic skills, including speaking and listening.

2. All West Virginia students need a developmental program in oral communication education. Such a program must be more than a casual injection of some incidental instruction. This study revealed that most students are receiving only six (6) weeks of instruction in oral communication. An effective oral communication program must meet all the structural and professional standards applied to any other program of study, including objectives, outcomes and assessment.

3. Since most English teachers admit that they are not trained to teach oral communication, and since there is a specific teacher certification in oral communication in West Virginia, a concentrated effort is needed to provide qualified oral communication teachers for all students. Six colleges and universities in West Virginia have teacher preparation programs in oral communication in operation. Judging from student response to previous teacher-need-surveys, when administrators announce the need for qualified oral communication teachers, students will enter these programs.

4. Until qualified oral communication teachers are available, English teachers should be provided proper inservice training. Workshops and continuing education courses could provide a temporary background of information about teaching the skills of speaking and listening.

5. The West Virginia Board of Education should recognize the skills of speaking and listening as essential, and should identify speaking and listening as deserving a year of special attention (as reading, writing and mathematics have been recognized in recent years).

6. The tendency of implementing a curriculum which is determined by politics or popular myths must be resisted. If the prevailing inverted curriculur continues, the educational system is operating with a critical, inherient flaw. The challenge of creating excellence in education can be met only if the skills of speaking and listening are included in a balanced curriculum.

From the WEST VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS (1980)

RATIONALES AND CONTENT OUTLINES FOR REQUIRED UNITS

English-Language Arts ..... 4 units

Rationale

All high school graduates need to have the skills necessary for functioning in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Four units of a structured English-language arts curriculum are needed to ensure that all students receive specific instruction in all skills areas. Skills instruction is needed at appropriate developmental levels to increase student achievement and proficiency.

Content

The English-language arts curriculum shall provide specific instruction in the following areas:

1. receptive skills of listening and reading,
2. expressive skills of speaking, writing and composition, and
3. core skills of English language, spelling, library, literature, and thinking.

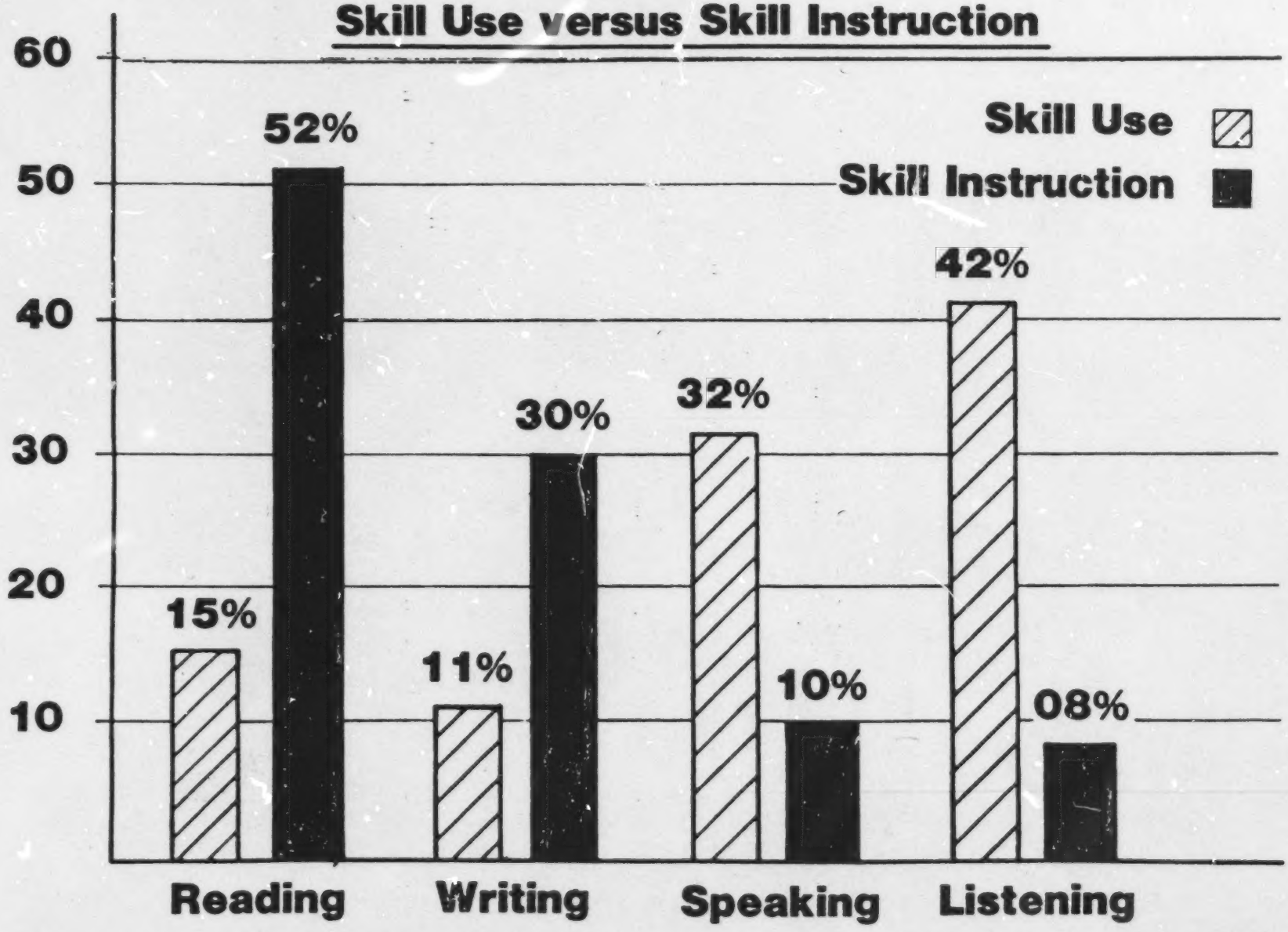
This instruction shall accommodate student needs on an accelerated, developmental, or remedial basis.

A maximum of ½ unit of credit in speech may be included in the four required units of English-language arts. Journalism, speech (excluding the ½ unit allowed), drama, theatre, and other related courses are electives and shall not be used as any of the four required units of English-language arts. (Emphasis added)

Social Studies ..... 3 units

Rationale

All high school graduates need to have the knowledge and skills necessary to assume a variety of roles in our democratic society. To assume these roles, students need a back ground in the social sciences with specific emphasis on history, economics, civics and government, and global perspectives.


Skill Use versus Skill Instruction
60
50
40
30
20
10
52%
Skill Use
Skill Instruction
42%
30%
32%
15%
11%
10%
08%
Reading
Writing
Speaking
Listening

APPENDIX 2

Original Source:

Paul T. Rankin, "The Importance of Listening", English Journal, 19(October 1928), 623-630.

Replicated:

D. Bird, "Teaching Listening Comprehension", Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 30(March, 1954), 225-230.

Tom Burns, "The Directions of Activity and Communication in a Departmental Executive Group," Human Relations, 7(1954), 73-97.

L. Breiter, "Research in Listening and Its Importance to Literature" Unpublished Master's Thesis, 1957.

John R. Hinrichs, "Communication Activity of Industrial Research Personnel," Personnel Psychology, 17(1964), 193-204.

E. T. Klemmer and F. W. Snyder, "Measurement of Time Spent Communicating, "Journal of Communication, 22(June 1972), 148-158.

E. K. Werner, "A Study of Communication Time". Master's Thesis: University of Maryland, College Park, 1975.

L. Barker, R. Edwards, C. Gains, K. Gladney, & F. Holley, "An Investigation of Proportional Time Spent in Various Communication Activities by College Students", Journal of Applied Communication Research, 3(1980), 101-109.

SOURCES:

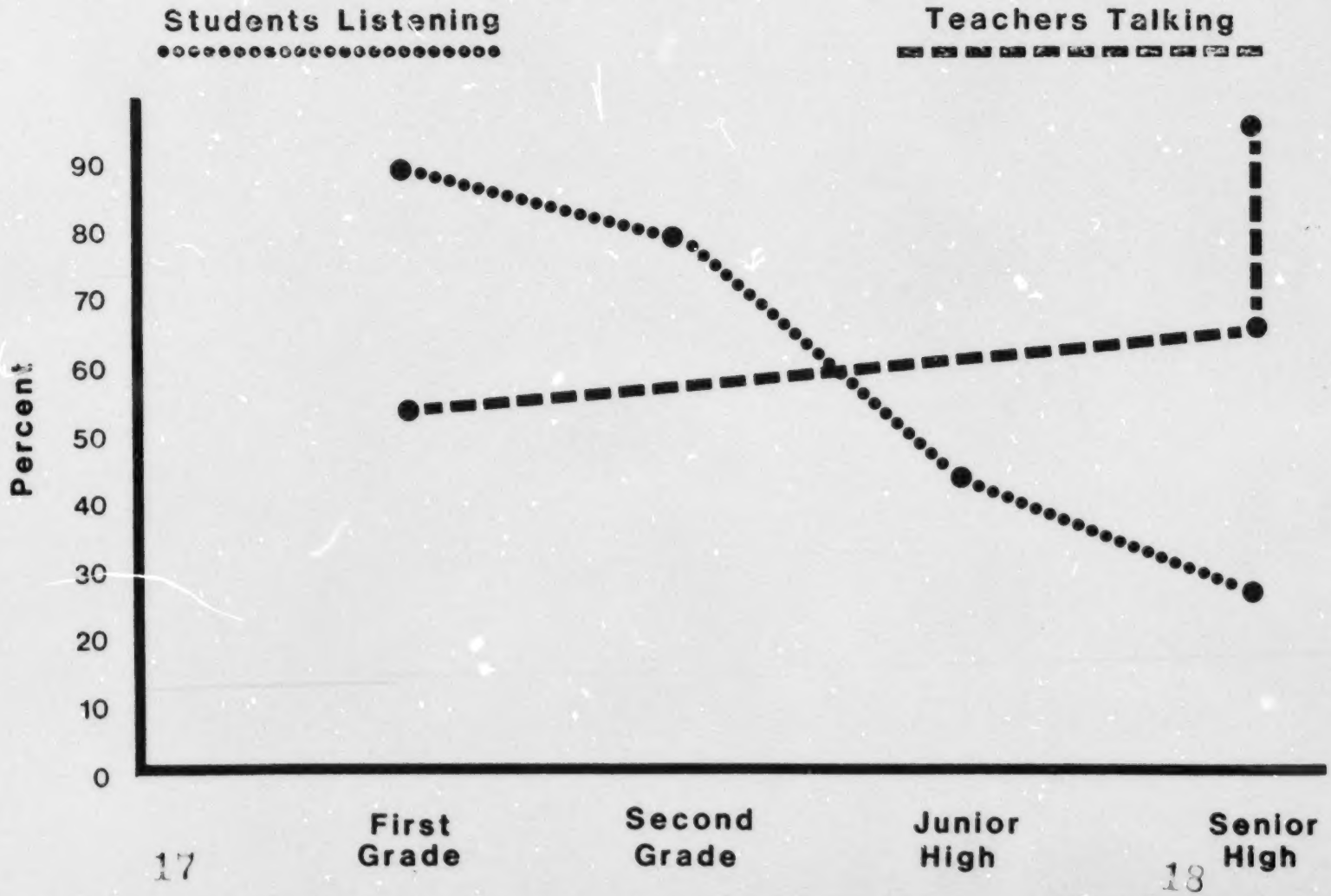
STUDENTS LISTENING: Ralph G. Nichols and Leonard Stevens: Are You Listening? (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957), 12-13.

TEACHERS TALKING: Markgarf, Bruce R.: "An Observational Study Determining the Amount of Time that Students in the Tenth and Twelfth Grades are Expected to Listen in the Classroom". Master's Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1957.

Wilt, Miriam E., "A Study of Teacher Awareness of Listening as a Factor in Elementary Education", Ph.d. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1949.

Gladfelder, Mary D. "Reviews of the Status of Listening Skills and Implications for Classroom Teachers." Master's Thesis Drake University, 1970.

Teachers Talking & Students Listening



APPENDIX 3

"BASIC SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES FOR PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT" (p.47)

"This list of skills developed by business representatives draws heavily upon the work done by the work done by The Center for Public Resources and Project EQuality of the College Board...

SPEAKING AND LISTENING COMPETENCIES." (pp.48-49)

Task Force on Education for Economic Growth: ACTION FOR EXCELLENCE. (Boulder, Colorado: Education Commission of the State, 1983)

APPENDIX 4

"The Basic Academic Competencies are reading, writing, SPEAKING AND LISTENING, mathematics, reasoning and studying. These competencies are interrelated to and interdependent with the Basic Academic Subjects. Without such competencies, knowledge of history, science, language, and all the other sujects is unattainable." (Emphasis Added) (p.7)

ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE: What Students Need to Know and Be Able to Do. (New York: The College Board, 1983)

"Therefore, we recommend that high schools give priority to oral communication, requiring all students to complete a course in speaking and listening."
(p. 92)

Ernest L. Boyer: *HIGH SCHOOL: A Report on Secondary Education in America* The Carneigie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (New York: Harper and Row, 1983)

APPENDIX 6

"Speaking and Listening — This competency was singled out as the major form of communication in business and industry, yet one in which many students receive little or no instruction."

(p.3)

ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR THE WORLD OF WORK. (New York: The College Board, 1984).

APPENDIX 7

ORAL COMMUNICATION INVENTORY

Mark the space provided in front of the appropriate response.

1. How many semesters (1/2 year each) of English(language arts)did you take in junior high (grades 7-8)?

____ ____0. _____1. _____2. _____3. _____4.

2. How many semesters (1/2 year each) of English language arts did you take in high school (grades 9-12)?

_____0. _____1. _____2. _____3. _____4. _____5. _____6. _____7. _____8.

3. Did you receive any instruction in speech/oral communication in your English classes in grades 9-12?

_____ Yes _____No.

4. How much instruction in speech/oral communication did you receive in grades 4-8? (If more than one of the following indicate number of units in blank.) _____ none

_____6 week unit(s) _____ 9 week unit(s) _____ semester unit(s) _____year(s

5. How much instruction in speech/oral communication did you receive in grades 9-12? (If more than one of the following indicate number of units in blank.) _____none

_____6 week unit(s) _____9 week unit(s) _____ semester unit(s) _____year(s)

6. How much instruction in listening did you receive in grades 7-12?

_____none. _____only in one year _____in two years _____ in three years. _____in four years. _____in five years. _____in six years.

7. How long did your instruction in listening last?

_____ none

_____one class. _____one week. _____two weeks. _____three weeks

_____four weeks. _____five weeks. _____six weeks. _____ more.

8. How much instruction in drama/theatre in grades 7-12 did you receive?

_____none _____ 6 week unit(s) _____ 9 week unit(s) _____semester uni

_____ in year(s).

APPENDIX 9: SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

	Parkersburg Comm. Col.	Fairmont State Col.	Glenville State Col.	West Liberty State Col.	Concord College	Marshall University	West Virginia University	Summar All
No. Respondents	87	224	109	92	123	402	1155	2192
Eng. 7-8 (4 years)	87.4%	84.8%	88.1%	87.0%	91.1%	93.3%	89.9%	89.7%
Eng. 9-12 (4 years)	58.6%	78.6%	73.4%	70.7%	78.0%	79.6%	83.1%	79.7%
Oral Comm. in English (7-12) (Yes)	37.9%	48.2%	43.1%	58.7%	35.8%	44.1%	55.1%	50.1%
Oral Comm. in 4-8 (None)	81.6%	75.9%	77.1%	74.2%	85.6%	66.9%	56.7%	64.7%
(some)	18.4%	24.1%	22.9%	25.8%	14.4%	33.1%	43.3%	35.3%
Oral Comm. in 9-12 (None)	59.8%	45.5%	75.4%	38.5%	57.7%	46.5%	39.1%	64.7%
(some)	40.2%	54.5%	42.6%	61.5%	42.3%	53.5%	60.9%	43.8%
Listening in 7-12 (none)	82.8%	78.6%	73.4%	46.7%	61.8%	62.7%	63.0%	65.1%
(some)	17.2%	21.4%	26.6%	53.3%	38.2%	37.3%	37.0%	34.9%
Listening in 7-12 (none)	82.8%	77.6%	72.5%	44.6%	58.5%	61.9%	60.5%	63.1%
(some)	17.2%	22.4%	27.5%	55.4%	41.5%	38.1%	39.5%	36.9%
Drama (none)	72.4%	64.7%	62.4%	65.2%	74.6%	59.7%	56.2%	60.0%
(some)	17.6%	35.3%	37.6%	34.8%	25.4%	40.3%	43.8%	40.0%

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